

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 IO-13 HA-05 /091 W
-----129802 011232Z /40

R 302200Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8108
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 5160

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS SHUM BR
SUBJECT: CARDINAL SALES' ASSESSMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN BRAZIL

1. SUMMARY. I MET WITH CARDINAL SALES FOR OVER THIRTY MINUTES ON JUNE 27 AND WE REVIEWED THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BRAZIL AND PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. CONSUL GENERAL DEXTER ACCOMPANIED ME. OVERALL, THE CARDINAL SAID THE SITUATION IS THE BEST IN BRAZIL SINCE 1964. ON BOTH HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, CARDINAL THOUGHT PERFORMANCE WAS ABOUT BEST THAT COULD BE EXPECTED "IN IMPERFECT WORLD". END SUMMARY.

2. CARDINAL CONSIDERED PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS A SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE AND THE MOST THAT COULD BE EXPECTED AT THIS TIME. IN CONVERSATION WITH MDB LEADER (SENATOR SATURNINO), HE SAID HE HAD ADVISED CAUTION IN EXERTING PRESSURE FOR EVEN MORE (DIRECT ELECTION OF GOVERNOR AND SENATORS) BECAUSE THIS COULD PRODUCE UNDESIRE REACTION. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WELL FOR THE MDB TO GIVE FIRST PRIORITY TO ENCOURAGING CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AT THIS TIME WITH SECONDARY EMPHASIS TO ACHIEVING NATIONAL OFFICE. CARDINAL SALES DISCUSSED HIS RECENT MEETING WITH FIGUEIREDO WHOM HE DESCRIBED IN GENERALLY FAVORABLE TERMS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD COUNELED FIGUEIREDO ON MAINTAINING PRESS FREEDOM AND FIGUEIREDO HAD SAID IT
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WOULD BE HIS POLICY TO SUFFER PRESS ABUSE RATHER THAN REPRESS PRESS FREEDOM.

3. CARDINAL EVALUATED HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BRAZIL AS GOOD IN IMPERFECT WORLD. HE KNEW OF NO RECENT ABUSES BY FEDERAL OR STATE OFFICIALS. THERE WERE ABOUT 35 PERSONS IN JAIL UNDER NATIONAL SECURIT
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LAWS. WHEN I ASKED IF THERE WERE POLITICAL PRISONERS HE REPLIED THAT MOST WERE THEREFOR BANK ROBBERY. SUCH ROBBERIES HAD BEEN PUT UNDER SECURITY TLAW ON THEORY THAT ROBBERIES WERE FOR PURPOSES OF FINANCING TERRORIST ACTIVITY. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OF SOME OF THESE PRISONERS BUT HIS OWN INVESTIGATIONS HAD LED HIM TO CONCLUDE ALLEGATIONS WERE UNTRUE. HE PUT TOTAL POPULATION IN STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO AT 10,000. HE VISITS PRISONS FREQUENTLY AND CLAIMS GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF PRISON CONDITIONS.

4. PROBLEM ON MISTREATMENT OF PERSONS ARRESTED, HE SAID, WAS AT STATE LEVEL AND NOT UNDER CONTROL OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HE CREDITED HEAD OF SECURITY IN STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO (GENERAL BRUNO NEGREIROS) WITH STRONG CHRISTIAN SPIRIT AND OPPOSED TO ANY MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS. NEVERTHELESS HE SAID VIOLENCE OCCURS BECAUSE OF LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF POLICE AND CLASS OF PEOPLE THEY ARE DEALING WITH. HE SAID MOST OF THIS OCCURS BETWEEN GANGS OF CRIMINALS INVOLVED IN SUCH THINGS AS DRUG TRAFFICING WHICH POLICE ARE TYING TO STOP. HE DISCUSSED MEETING HE HAD HELD WITH ALL POLICE CHIEFS IN STATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. HE GAVE ME IMPRESSION HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LONG PROCESS TO WEAN POLICE FROM ROUGH TACTICS BUT HE CONSIDERED IT HIS OBLIGATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO EFFORTS TO DO SO.

5. I ASKED HIM IF HE WERE SAYING IT WAS NOW PRIMARILY CULTURAL PROBLEM. HE SAID IT WAS. I ASKED HIM IF PROBLEM WAS DIFFERENT IN RECIFE, SALVADOR OR SAO PAULO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 5160

HE REPLIED NEGATIVELY. HE SAID NATURE OF PROBLEM WAS SAME IN METROPOLITAN AREAS BUT MORE PRONOUNCED AS YOU MOVED TO WESTERN FRONTIERS.

6. CARDINAL SPENT SOME TIME DISCUSSING PROBLEMS HE HAD HAD WITH

POLITICAL ASYLEES FROM ARGENTINA AND CHILE. A FEW WERE NOT POLITICAL BUT POVERTY CASES AND THIS GAVE HIM EVEN GREATER PROBLEM BECAUSE NO OTHER COUNTRY WANTED TO TAKE THEM. THERE HAD BEEN ABOUT 900 UNDER HIS PROTECTION. NOW HE HAD LESS THAN 100. HE SAID BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY INFORMED OF PRESENCE OF POLITICAL ASYLEES AND COOPERATED BUT WAS UNWILLING TO TAKE OFFICIAL ROLE AND DISCOURAGED PRESS TREATMENT OF ISSUE. ASYLEES WERE TAKEN CARE OF BY UNHCR AND PRIVATE CHARITY GROUPS, PARTICULARLY CARITAS AND WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

7. COMMENT: CARDINAL SALES' ASSESSMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS ESSENTIALLY SAME AS THAT OF PAPAL NUNCIO AND DIRECTOR OF O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO (BRASILIA 5073): (A) GEISEL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN TERMINATING ABUSE OF PRISONERS AND DOES NOT CONDONE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY FEDERAL OFFICIALS; (B) THAT ABUSES DO OCCUR AT STATE POLICE LEVEL BUT ARE NOT OFFICIALLY CONDONED; (C) THAT LOW SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF POLICE IS SOURCE OF ALMOST ALL OF ABUSES THAT

DO OCCUR AND THIS WILL TAKE LONG TIME TO CORRECT; AND (D) THAT
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OVERALL SITUATION IN BRAZIL IS MOVING RAPIDLY IN DIRECTION MORE OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND BEST POSTURE FOR USG AND CHURCH IN BRAZIL IS ONE OF DISCRETION.

8. ASSESSMENT OF CARDINAL ARNS IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT (BRASILIA 5074). HE WOULD AGREE WITH (A). HE AGREES WITH (B) EXCEPT HE IMPLIES THAT STATE PUBLIC SECURITY SECRETARY IN SAO PAULO LOOKS THE OTHER WAY ON POLICE ABUSE OF PRISONERS. ON (C) ARNS WOULD ALSO AGREE BUT IMPLIES DEGREE OF OFFICIAL TOLERATION BY SAO PAULO STATE OFFICIALS AND EVEN FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE. ON (D) ARNS IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH FRONT FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION BUT URGES GREAT DISCRETION ON PART OF USG.
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